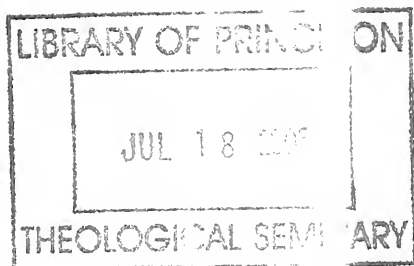


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Mutual duties and
responsibilities of pastor
and people : a sermon,
preached, on Sabbath,

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PASTOR AND PEOPLE:

A SERMON,

PREACHED, ON SABBATH, SEPTEMBER 4, 1836,

IN THE

SOUTH PARISH CHURCH, ABERDEEN,

ON OCCASION OF THE INTRODUCTION OF THE

REV. W. K. TWEEDIE,

TO THE PASTORAL CHARGE OF THAT CHURCH AND PARISH.

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER DUFF, D. D.

SECOND EDITION.

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EDINBURGH:

JOHN JOHNSTONE, PRINTER, HIGH STREET.

TO THE
KIRK-SESSION AND CONGREGATION
OF
South Parish Church, Aberdeen,
THIS SERMON,
PUBLISHED AT THEIR UNITED EARNEST REQUEST,
IS DEDICATED,
WITH SENTIMENTS OF GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

SERMON.

“ So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel ; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die ; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it ; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity ; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”—EZEK. xxxiii. 7–9.

WHEN a country is invaded by some foreign foe : when the armies of the aggressor have overspread the land : when a blighted surface marks the progress of their ravages : when the chains of unoffending victims display the relentless cruelty of their revenge : when the active movements of hostile squadrons are discerned, and the voice of the trumpet that hitherto has sounded the certain note of battle and defeat, is heard from the watch-towers of the fortress, that forms the last and lingering hope of a once flourishing, but now greatly diminished power :—when it is dreaded that within are many faithless men, whose treacherous machinations are concealed under the mask of friendship, and who only await the critical moment of disaster or despair, to strengthen the hands of those who have

laid bare many an altar, and left many a city smoking in its ruins :—Shall he be hailed as a patriot citizen, who whispers in softest accents that danger is far distant,—who circulates and foment the ruinous suggestion to relax those efforts that might yet render resistance successful, and, turning the tide of conquest, lay prostrate the insulting foe,—who encourages the thousands around him to banish idle cares and silence unfounded alarms, and speedily betake themselves to gay and luxurious delights, and loll in the lap of voluptuous ease, and run the round of lawless revelry ? No. He is pronounced a traitor to his country's cause ; to him is awarded a traitor's doom ; and over his remains are raised the insignia of a traitor's grave.

Now, have ye not heard, at least by the hearing of the ear, that the earth we dwell upon is a vanquished territory of the prince of darkness ? Ever since the hour of that fell catastrophe which “brought death into the world with all our woe,” down to the present, has the great adversary of God and man, laboured with sleepless vigilance, to consummate the triumph which he then gained. The unquenchable longing of his soul has been to thwart the plans, and subvert the purposes of the Almighty. And all his vast energies have been intensely engaged in subtle artifice to deceive, and murderous cruelty to drag the miserable race of Adam headlong to “the lake that burneth.”

When, therefore, this earth, instead of being a garden for refreshment and rest, is none other than the arena of mortal combat : when the enemy is in possession of its extended territories, and no place of safety is left save the

refuge provided by the Gospel : when the sudden vicissitudes and strange convulsions of nature herald the presence of the conqueror ; and the voice of weeping, lamentation, and woe, ever resounds in the train of his success : when all possible advantages in the field of strife are in his favour : when he can appeal, without ever appealing in vain, to the eternal sanctions of God's righteous law, to the frowns and allurements of the world, and to the evil propensities of wicked and deceitful hearts, to aid him in the attempt to carry by storm or stratagem the only remaining citadel :—Shall he be hailed as the friend of man, and a patriot citizen of Zion, who sits down in ignoble repose, and softly whispers, “ peace, peace,” when all is the cheerless peace of the sepulchre?—who, by delusive prospects of security, beguiles thousands into the snares of the foul destroyer, or, by the application of active stimulants, hurries them to the streams of false delight, and leaves them without a sigh, gaily to dance around the brink of the bottomless pit, and plunge beneath, the victims of perdition ? He may be so hailed by the thoughtless and giddy throng, who are the blinded instruments of Satan's malice, the miserable drudges of his imperious will, the cowering subjects of his dire dominion. But hailed he shall not be, by the sons of light, who are loyal adherents of the cause of Heaven. By saints, and by the King of Saints, he shall be arraigned as a traitor ; to him shall be allotted a traitor's award ; and in everlasting burnings he shall wear the memorials of a traitor's crime.

And who is this traitor that shall be so recompensed ? Every faithless, careless, inconsistent, hypocritical profes-

sor of the religion of Jesus is such traitor. And every minister who is a faithless, slothful, and slumbering “watchman” on the walls of our Zion, is an arch-traitor to his God. Harken to the language addressed to the prophet of old, when appointed a watchman to the House of Israel ; and as addressed to him, so in substance, to all, in every age, who have undertaken to be watchmen to immortal souls against surrounding enemies :—“ When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die ; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thine hand.”

In the face of such a charge as this, involving responsibilities at which one may well pause and tremble, shall we wilfully evoke the justice of Heaven to require at our hands the blood of lost souls ? Shall we soothe the fears of those who are smitten with the plague-spot of sin, by pronouncing them “ whole,” when “ from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is nought but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores ?” Shall we assuage the rising tumult of alarm by sounding the lullaby of “ peace, peace,” when deadly war is raging through the vitals of the kingdom ? This were not kindness, but cruelty—not love, but hatred—not friendship, but enmity—not the savour of life, but the savour of death unto death.

We may not, therefore, we must not, we dare not, withhold the warning addressed by God himself to the wicked ; for, the terms of the Divine appointment are, “ thou shalt hear the word at *my* mouth, and warn them from *me*,”—and the alternative presented to the watchman is, “ If

thou warn the wicked, thou hast delivered thy soul ; but if thou warn him not, his blood will I require *at thine hand*.”

Who, then, it may be asked, are to be warned ? Against what is the warning directed ? How are those warned to escape ? And by what exhortations is the warning to be enforced ?

Questions these, that are fraught with consequences the most momentous—since on the right solution of them hang the issues of life, the solemnities of judgment, and the awards of eternity.

I. It is the Christian watchman’s duty faithfully to declare who are to be warned.

The reply in our text is, “the wicked.” And who are the wicked or unrighteous ? The reply furnished by inspiration is, “all ;” for “all have sinned,” and “there is none righteous, no not one.” This is the language of unqualified totality, and admits not the possibility of exception. Think not, therefore, ye who are adorned with the natural graces, think not that ye are exempted. There may cluster around you much that is “lovely and of good report” among men. There may be tenderness of affection, sweetness of disposition, modesty of address, unaffected simplicity of manners, compassion at the sight of misery, generosity towards the undeserving. And the possession of these may render you amiable—and amiableness seldom fails to excite sympathy and love. But with all this, there may not be a jot or tittle of holiness, or spiritual excellence, as viewed with complacency by a God of sovereign power, and burning purity of na-

ture. Let it only be borne in mind, that to the great Creator, Preserver, and Proprietor of all, the undivided homage of the heart and the affections is supremely due throughout every period of time, and every change of place. And who amongst you would undertake to present yourselves before the divine tribunal, and expect to abide the application of such a test of *universal* obedience? Ah! if to the whole current of your daily thoughts and actions the divine reckoning were to be rigidly applied, which of these thoughts were concerning *me*, which of these words were spoken, which of these actions were performed with a sole and undivided reference to *my* glory?—would not the most amiable amongst you be struck dumb, and for ever remain speechless? Were it only possible for you, through the convincing influence of God's Spirit, to look inwardly, and review your secret and undeveloped sins—your sins against natural knowledge, reason, and conscience—your sins in thought, and feeling, and desire;—or even those incipient motions and tendencies towards sin—while fancy yet flutters, and inclination hovers on the brink of actual commission—motions and tendencies, that flit up and down the chambers of imagery, swift as the velocity of time, and numberless as the motes that play in the solar beams.—Ah! were it only possible to behold all of these, spread over a lifetime, collected into one vast aggregate, as they are seen in the light of Jehovah's countenance, would not the most amiable amongst you stand abashed, and, like the patriarch of old, acknowledging that ye are vile, abhor yourselves in dust and ashes?

I have now spoken of sins overspreading a lifetime, but I am willing to reduce the time of reckoning within a narrower compass. I shall suppose that an eternity of bliss, or an eternity of woe, was to be suspended on the absolute perfection of the homage of the heart and affections to the Father of Spirits—the absolute devotedness of the thoughts and imagination to the glory and honour of the sovereign Lord of all, since we this day assembled in this house of prayer. How many amongst us would be willing to abide by the issue of the scrutiny of the all-searching eye, even during a period so very limited? How many amongst us would be found whose thoughts had not wandered for an instant in prayer? How many, whose affections were not for a moment cold and uninterested in praise? How many, whose minds were not, in any measurable degree, listless, or languid, or indifferent, or distracted, when professedly listening to the words of life? How many such, think ye, would be found amongst us? Would the majority? Would the half? Would the tenth part? Would even one?—Great God of heaven and of earth! I tremble at the thought—I shudder at the awful certainty of the issue! I for one, would sink at once into despair! But, Lord, I thank thee that thou hast so solemnly warned the wicked! Lord, then, save thou, or we perish!

II. As all are to be warned, because all are wicked or unrighteous, it is the Christian watchman's duty faithfully to proclaim against what the warning is directed.

Doubtless it is against all that is inimical to man's present and everlasting welfare. And as sin is the great

antagonist principle of the supreme good which constitutes the beauty, the health, and stability of the moral universe, the warning must be specially directed against that fertile source of all our woe—against its instruments, whether belonging to the world of matter or of spirit—against its agents, whether natural or supernatural, visible or invisible—and against its consequences, whether temporal or eternal. But, as the wages of sin in every shape and form is death, and as all its instrumentalities and agencies converge towards, and all its dread effects may, by way of eminence, be said to concentrate in death, as its final irreversible consummation; the Almighty himself, engulfing, as it were, every minor interest and consideration, in that one all-absorbing doom, has uttered his voice,—the voice at which Sinai shook—saying, “Hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me: when I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity;”—shall die the death, not death temporal or spiritual, merely, but the second death,—death eternal!

But who can tell what is included in death eternal? He who was endowed with omniscience, and whose love to the sons of men many waters could not quench, nor the floods of great waters drown, represented it under awful but undefined images of horror. It is the worm that never dies; it is the fire that is never quenched; it is an outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth; it is an everlasting destruction from the presence of God and his angels. But who, that has not crossed those adamantine walls that encircle the lake

which burneth with fire and brimstone for evermore, can conceive the realities of anguish and torment which these images pourtray? Where the tongue of inspiration confessedly faltered, and human language, moulded by divinity, failed; how much more must ours be expected to falter and fail too! Bereft, therefore, of every expedient, save that of convicted ignorance, we can only sit down, and exclaim, it is inconceivable—it is unutterable!

III. Having thus ascertained that all are warned, and warned to flee from the wrath to come, or death eternal, it is the Christian watchman's duty clearly to point out the way of escape.

The expression, "If thou warn the wicked of his way *to turn from it*, and *if he do not turn from it*," necessarily implies the *possibility of turning*. For, if there were no possibility of escape, vehemently to warn of danger, were only to heap derision upon despair. What then is the divinely appointed method of return?

This at once introduces us to the most difficult of problems; "how God could be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly." For all men have sinned, and sin is the transgression of the law, and the law is "the strength of sin." In other words, that law which, when obeyed, is the very sheet-anchor of a holy universe, becomes, when disobeyed, the ever-active accuser and inexorable judge of a sinning creation. Nor is there any mystery in this. For what is the law of God? It is the very essence of what is pure, and reasonable, and right; and, as such, can make no allowances, and admit of no abate-

ments on account of sin. This law, therefore, the due observance of which promotes the glory of God, and the supreme happiness of his intelligent creation, is altogether unyielding in its demands. The fact of our being its transgressors, and of our having lost the very inclination to obey it, diminishes not the claims of the law, nor makes it stoop to any accommodating compromise. It is founded on the unchangeable nature of God. It is a fair transcript of the divine perfections. How, then, could the honour of God be vindicated, did he allow of any addition, subtraction, or change? What! attempt to add to what is infinitely perfect! The very thought is impious. Attempt to subtract from, or alter, what is infinitely holy, just, and good! The very thought is derogatory to the honour and the majesty of the Most High.

Here, then, is a law whose demands cannot be mitigated in consistency with God's holy character—a law, the very slightest deviation from which, subjects the transgressor to the penalty of eternal death—a law, which, in requiring a perfect conformity to the will of God in every thought and affection of the soul, stops every mouth, and declares the whole human race, without one single exception, to be guilty before God—a law, which, when it comes home in all its light and uncompromising energy to the conscience of the most morally upright man under heaven, must lay prostrate all his self-righteousness, and make him appear in the character of a self-condemned criminal. What then must be done? The law is unalterable. It still thunders in our ears that our obe-

dience must be perfect, and if not, pronounces the fearful denunciations of divine wrath. What then must be done? God's law is broken, his name dishonoured, his authority despised, and his everlasting truth and justice equally demand that the sentence shall be put into execution. What then is to be done? Is there no way of escape? Is God's mercy clean gone for ever? Are we left to groan in everlasting despair? And shall the king of terrors for ever exult over the sad memorials of his redoubted victory? Oh! No. Hail blessed Emmanuel! Hail crucified Jesus! Let heaven and earth sing their loudest hosannahs to thy glorious name! In thy cross, we behold the divine law magnified, and yet its avenging power destroyed. In thy cross, we behold the divine law demonstrated to be unchangeable as the fountain of existence, and yet all its demands satisfied, and all its threatened penalties for ever averted. In thy cross, we behold the divine wrath poured forth in fiery indignation against sin, we behold the divine justice inflicting the merited condemnation; and yet that anger turned away from the sinner and converted into love, and that justice satisfied and converted into mercy. Oh! who can tell what seas of difficulties were then dried up, what mountains of apparent impossibilities were levelled in that hour of darkness and of horror? Away then with the whole rubbish of human devices, and works of merit, and rags of righteousness, and let the giant deed stand forth alone in its transcendent greatness, its resplendent lustre. And let the souls of the redeemed on earth respond to the song of heaven, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing ; for thou hast redeemed us by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

IV. It is the Christian watchman's duty to enforce all his warnings and instructions by the most urgent exhortations.

But what need, it may be asked, after all that has now been stated, what need of any additional exhortations? On the supposition that ye were uninterested hearers of statements like the preceding, what would ye naturally imagine ought to be the conduct of offenders so circumstanced, and made to listen to such glad tidings of great joy? Would ye not imagine that one and all of them would rush forward almost with violence, and fall down before the divine footstool, and confess, and pray, " Lord, I am a worm of the dust, a sinful rebel. I lie before thee self-condemned ; justly hast thou doomed me to death—death temporal, spiritual, and eternal. But now thou hast assured the guilty that there is deliverance through the cross of Christ. To it I flee. And, through the grace and strength of the Spirit, striving to settle there, and weather out the storm of thy righteous indignation, I would ascribe unto thee, all the praise and the glory, for ever and ever, amen."

Would ye not, if called on to judge as unconcerned spectators, would ye not suppose that such would be the ready confession, and such the earnest prayer of every offending transgressor? What then shall we say, when ye

yourselves are the guilty transgressors? In judging others, have ye not passed sentence of condemnation upon yourselves, if your conduct does not comport with the righteous judgment delivered? And what is your conduct? What does conscience say as in the presence of the all-seeing God? Does its peace point to the repose of heaven, or its disquietude to the restless tossings of the fiery lake? Oh, we believe, we verily believe, that some are present here, whose knowledge and experience accurately correspond with every feature and lineament of the above representation! And such we regard, as they are the most ready to acknowledge themselves to be, as brands snatched from the burning. And such we pronounce happy now, and happy, inconceivably happy, for evermore. For these, however poor or despised their condition, are, after all, the real nobles of the earth. They are the sons of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. And they shall one day sit on thrones, and live and reign with him for ever and ever. But Oh, we are forced, however unwillingly, to believe that such is not the condition of many, aye, perhaps of the great majority in this, or any other congregation of professing Christians! Often have ye been besought by faithful watchmen in this place, as from the borders of the grave, and the frontiers of perdition, to return and be reconciled to a gracious God. And yet it seems to us as if we must still take up the burden of the prophet's complaint and cry out, "Who hath believed our report?" It seems to us as if we had spent our strength in vain, and our labour for nought. It seems to us as if the earth were of iron, and the hea-

vens of brass, and no dew descending. It seems to us as if, in the good-natured simplicity of idiocy, we had been singing a song to awaken unto life some mangled and putrid carcasses, or waving a feather to arrest the career of a raging hurricane, or sprinkling a few drops of water to soften and liquify some rocks of solid adamant. For, “Who hath believed our report?”—“Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth: the Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him. They have become a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters. They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger!”—And yet, when, instead of consuming them as dross, and devouring them as stubble, the Lord condescends to appoint watchmen, to warn the wicked,—yea, pointing to the meritorious death of the blessed Emmanuel, to enter into the language of earnest encouraging entreaty, saying, “Come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,”—Oh, how is all such expostulation and entreaty, and forth-putting of the divine forbearance, and goodness, and love, too often met with on our part? “Wonder, O heavens, and be ye horribly amazed!”—Men, apostate rebels, seized by justice and condemned to die, seem to take a fiend-like advantage of the short respite allowed them by a compassionate God. And we hear of some idly engaged in speculating on the essence and constitution of the Godhead; and others, in framing theories on the nature and origin of man: some, mightily

offended at the humbling charges of guilt that are preferred against them ; and others, roused into indignation at the denouncement of eternal woe : some, quarrelling with the divine rank and majesty of the Mediator ; and others, affecting to disdain salvation through a crucified Redeemer : some, scorning to receive pardon as the result of free and sovereign grace ; and others, making light of the whole matter,—insinuating that the message may not be from God, and that those who propound it, may be interested deceivers.

In these, and similar ways, do self-blinded men often reject the counsels of a merciful God, to their own destruction and everlasting infamy. How, then, are we to deal with such of this description as are now present ? How are we to bring home the arrows of conviction into your consciences ? Or, shall we desist from the attempt altogether ? Shall we leave you undisturbed ? Shall we, out of a false and temporizing charity, allow you to proceed onwards without sounding an alarm ? Shall we, with a view to win your good opinion, dismiss the peculiar doctrines of Christianity as dry, and harsh, and offensive to ears polite ? Shall we rather descant on the beauties of virtue, the decencies and moralities of social and private life, or the speculations of a vain but fascinating philosophy ? Shall we dwell on the dignity of human nature, and extol its excellencies, and magnify its pretensions to glory and honour, and even to the praise and approbation of the great God ? Ah, then, would we only prove the murderers of your immortal souls,—cruelly exemplifying the conduct of the fiendish man, who could amuse

thoughtless children with toys and sweetmeats, till he allured them to the brink of the fatal precipice, down which they tumbled and were dashed to pieces in the fall ! Great God, forbid that we should thus be guilty of the blood of souls !

Regardless, therefore, alike of the censure or applause, the opposition or the favour of men, as mere men, we stand before you simply as watchmen bearing the commission of Christ, to whom, and not to you, we have to give an account. And as He came “to seek and to save that which was lost,” we have to declare to all of you who have not yet fled to the Saviour, the unerring sentence of Heaven, and pronounce you *lost*. And we would call on you anew, to weigh the import of the awful word *lost*,—and to connect it with the equally awful word *perish*,—and then, in solemn seriousness, to ask yourselves, how ye can dwell with devouring fire, how ye can dwell with everlasting burnings ?—how ye can endure the stinging worm of a guilty conscience that will never die, and the fire of that divine wrath which your own sins have enkindled, that never will be quenched ?—And we might harrow your feelings, and awaken your horror, by an appeal that could only be effectually re-echoed by the shrieks of tormented outcasts, and the groans of agonized spirits. But we know full well, that, however necessary in arousing, the terrors of the Lord can never soften into the obedience of love ; and if dwelt upon exclusively, might drive weak-minded men into despair. Praise, then, eternal praise to Jehovah, Lord of Hosts, that, amid the threatenings of impending judgment, and the storms of a coming vengeance,

the heavens have rent asunder, and the Sun of Righteousness has burst, in effulgent glory, on a tempest-tossed and shipwrecked world,—and a voice has been heard from the peaceful regions beyond ;—it is the voice of a beseeching God—the voice of kindness and love unspeakable. And this voice, we are commanded, as faithful watchmen, again and again to reiterate in your hearing, “ As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but rather that the wicked would return and live : turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? ”

And, oh, that we could cause the awakening voice to reach the consciences of every one of you ; yea, proclaim it aloud, till the dwellers in the wilderness had heard the sound, and the tenants of the rock had sent back the echo, that God is waiting to be gracious to you all—that he wills not the death of any, even the most unrighteous of a fallen and rebellious race. Only return to the stronghold as prisoners of hope, and Christ, with all the blessings of the new covenant, will be yours. Are ye ignorant and foolish ? He is made of God unto you, Wisdom. Are ye guilty and condemned ? He is made of God unto you, Righteousness. Are ye vile and polluted ? He is made of God unto you, Sanctification. Are ye captive and enthralled ? He is made of God unto you, Redemption. Are ye in darkness ? He is the brightness of the Father’s glory. Are ye in sorrow and sadness ? He is the Consolation of Israel. Are ye labouring under spiritual maladies ? He is the balm in Gilead, and the Almighty Physician there. Are ye cold and callous, dead in trespasses and sins, without even the will to be saved ? He sends

forth the Comforter to quicken, and subdue, and apply all the enriching influences of his grace. To sinners of every degree; to sinners of every name and age; to sinners of every rank, and temper, and disposition; we “preach Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wisdom of God,” for your salvation. We again testify and declare, that if Heaven continue to frown upon you, it is because of your hardened impenitence. If ye are miserable, and without hope, the fault is your own. If ye die in your sins, your blood will be on your own heads. If ye perish, it is not for want of a Saviour. If ye agonize for ever under the load of unforgiven sin, it is not because you have not been warned and entreated; for how shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation? And to leave you finally without excuse—we protest and appeal in the presence of angels and of men! If,—in the immediate view of those affecting memorials of a once suffering but now exalted Saviour, the piercing spear, and the crown of thorns, and the bloody sweat, and the accursed tree,—ye still rush on, with “frantic speed,” to the gulph of perdition, will ye not deservedly perish? What! deservedly perish? Oh, righteous Father! shall thy children first raise the standard of an impious rebellion against thee?—and, in the view of infinite mercies, with the flag of peace waving before their eyes, and the banner of free pardon streaming from the walls of the New Jerusalem, shall they still set at nought all thy counsel, and deliberately resolve to perish?—perish miserably and everlastingly, by plunging the unhallowed weapons, that proved impotent against thee, not into frail bodies that must crumble into dust,

but into their own souls—those precious souls that will never die? *Must* thine unnatural children be left thus to perish in their madness, as they deserve? No, no. Once more we hear the voice from heaven, breaking in accents of tenderness on the stillness of this assembly :—“ As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” Awake, arise, then, ye who still slumber and sleep, and even at the eleventh hour, shall Christ give you light. “ Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen.”

But I must now hasten to the more immediate business of the day, to which the remarks already offered seem to furnish a natural introduction.

Dearly beloved brethren,—A new relationship has now been commenced and ratified between yourselves and the pastor of your own free choice. It is a high and holy relationship, that involves mutual duties and responsibilities of the most solemn character. You are the occupants of a stronghold, closely besieged by enemies at once numerous and powerful ; your pastor is the watchman appointed to walk round the walls, and sound the timely note of warning. Revolve then in your minds, all that has this day been uttered respecting the imminence of the danger, and the mode of escape, together with the office of the watchman in fearlessly arousing attention to both, and say whether the respective duties of watchman and watched, do not flash on your enlightened understandings with the constraining power of demonstrated truths ?

I am aware, that on an occasion like the present, it is

usual to descend from generals to particulars, as respects the reciprocal duties of pastor and people,—usual also, to unroll the catalogue of those peculiar talents and qualifications that specially fit the former for undertaking the oversight of the latter.

Your pastor's duties I leave in a great measure to be inferred from the statements already adduced, and from what may yet follow.

As to his talents and qualifications for the oversight of this flock, I can truly say, that did I wish to descant on the moral, intellectual, and experienced fitness of any man, I could not desire a more appropriate subject, or a more reasonable opportunity than the present. I might tell you of his musings, and researches, and well earned honours, when nursed in academic bowers. I might tell of his chivalrous ardour in the cause of truth, when, on the continent of Europe, he toiled in resuscitating materials from the tomb of oblivion, for the vindication of that illustrious man,—than whom a brighter luminary shone not among the morning stars of the Reformation,—the splendours of whose sanctified genius enkindled a corresponding flame in the bosom of our own great National Reformer; and, from him transmitted through congenial channels, have since been reflected in multiplied rays, from the breasts of thousands and tens of thousands of our Scottish population. I might tell of his unwearied watchfulness in “blowing the trumpet” in the high places of the land, and of his moral heroism in labouring to stem the torrent of covetousness and degeneracy that threatens to deluge the metropolis of these realms,—

and not of these realms only, but in respect to political and commercial influence, the metropolis of the globe itself.

On these, and similar topics, I might expatiate at large ; but having an instinctive aversion myself, almost bordering on abhorrence, of the ordinary but indelicate practice of pronouncing eulogies, however well deserved, on living men, more particularly in their own presence, I purposely forbear. And in doing so, I cherish the assured confidence that I have consulted my own judgment and feelings, not less than the judgment and feelings of my respected friend and brother, the newly installed shepherd of this flock.

Our God is a jealous God ; his glory will he not give to another ; and he has declared that he alone shall be exalted. We ought, therefore, to shudder at the very idea of creature-exaltation. Did even a heathen king exclaim, “is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and the honour of my majesty ?”—and was not the inspired historian directed with emphasis to add, that “while the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee ?” What a warning to all that are actuated by the spirit of the Babylonian monarch ! And yet, is it not the very spirit that too often pervades the sayings and doings, not of heathens but of Christians, and too often inflates those high-sounding panegyrics that ever and anon drop around us, from the prince to the peasant, thick as the leaves of autumn ?

Did men only remember, that if their knowledge more

than equalled that of the cherubim, or “knowing ones”—knowing, with a force of intuition that bears the nearest approach to the divine omniscience; and their holiness and zeal outshone that of the seraphim or “burning ones,”—burning with a purity and clearness of which the brightness of flaming fire presents no adequate emblem; and the fervour of their devotion were more ecstatic than that of the ten thousand times ten thousand that chant their hallelujahs before the throne;—they would, after all, in the sight of Jehovah, be as nothing, yea “less than nothing and vanity.” Did they only remember, that if they spoke with the tongues of angels and archangels, and their labours of love outrivalled the united achievements of the noble army of prophets, apostles, and martyrs,—they would still, as dependent creatures, be nothing better than “unprofitable servants.” Did they only feel, at all times, duly impressed by such humiliating but severely true reflections, oh! how would it cover with confusion and dismay that idolatrous spirit with whose laudatory prowess the world has for ages rung?

In accordance with such sentiments I at once leave my respected friend and brother to be the bearer of his own credentials. I leave his gifts and his graces, whether in the pulpit or in the closet, at the family altar, or at the weary pilgrim’s death-bed—in his walk and conversation, in his outgoings and incomings—I leave all, to be their own living testimonials. I desire to sink the man into the watchman. And the highest and truest eulogium that I can venture to pronounce upon him is, that as a watchman on the towers of this your Zion, he will be

sure to sound the trumpet so loud and so long, that if sinners awake and rise not, and so die in their iniquity, their blood will never, never be required at his hands.

Allow me, therefore, friends and brethren, sincerely to congratulate you on the happy termination of all your anxieties, by the harmonious introduction of such a watchman amongst you.

Not that a different result could from the first, have been reasonably apprehended. Believing, as we do, that there is a God in heaven that sits behind the veil of Providence, directing the ten thousand concurrent trains of causes and effects which constitute the moral not less than the material universe, one absolute “infinity of design,”—knowing also, that the rulers and members of this congregation were all along animated by the spirit of love, moved by the spirit of prayer, and guided by the spirit of peace,—how could we doubt that the Spirit of Him who is the God of love, the Hearer of prayer and the Father of peace, would ultimately guide them in safety to the haven of their hearts’ desire ?

There is however a calm enjoyment in fruition that pertains not to hope, however well founded—a settled repose in consummation that belongs not to the contemplation of means, however wisely instituted.

But, brethren, if, actuated by motives the most conscientious, and overborne by circumstances the most providential, your adopted pastor has been led to resign the previous charge of a devoted and beloved people ; and if, by so doing, the termination of your anxieties has proved the commencement of theirs—and your enrichment

their temporary impoverishment, oh, forget not, that they have imperative claims on your Christian sympathies, and your prayers.

This leads us next, briefly, but specifically, to consider some of the more important obligations due by you towards your newly appointed pastor ; since, by necessary consequence, onerous duties on his part, must involve corresponding obligations on yours.

1. It is your duty to receive him as “one set over you in the Lord,” and to honour him highly “for his work’s sake.”

Minds unbalanced by the spirit of holiness are ever apt to run into extremes. Thus, has superstition invariably clothed the priestly office with the functions of a divine vicegerency on earth ; while infidelity has as invariably refused the humble tribute due to a servant of the Most High. Be it your part scrupulously to avoid either extreme. Your pastor, you are bound to receive as one who does sustain a sort of representative character,—not, however, in the way of impiously personating divinity, but as appointed, in the good providence of God, to watch over your souls, as one that must give an account at the judgment-seat of Christ. If he executes aright his commission, his warnings may be blessed of God, to the saving of your souls. If he is faithless to his trust, the blood of your souls may be required at his hands. Surely, such terrible responsibility, voluntarily undertaken on your behalf, must ever rescue him from unmerited neglect, and mark him out as the worthy object of honour and esteem.

But, to honour and respect him, as “set over you in the Lord,” is one thing ; to “exalt him above measure,”

is another,—to esteem and love him “for his work’s sake,” one thing ; and quite another, to raise him to the dangerous pinnacle, where, amid showers of praise and adulation, hundreds have become intoxicated, have staggered, and have fallen. Bear ever in mind, that by no desert of his own, but by the grace of God, he is what he is. And while ye affectionately regard him as “the nursing father” of your souls, constantly ascribe the praise and the glory to Him who hath bestowed those gifts of nature and of grace, by the exercise of which sinners are warned, and saints are built up in their most holy faith. Thus shall ye succeed in delivering him from the curse of being foolishly idolized on the one hand, or wantonly contemned on the other.

2. It is your duty to be sparing in your demands on his time and strength.

People profess to be disappointed when there is a manifest unpreparedness in the Sabbath ministrations of their pastor. And yet, how often do these very people, during the week, by means of idle calls, unprofitable invitations, and redundant hospitalities—the recurrence of domestic fêtes and sundry religious festivals, under appropriate designations—labour as much as in them lies, to cut off the possibility of suitable preparations being made for the pulpit ? More than this, as if it were not enough to monopolize time, contributions must be unsparingly levied on strength too. Wherever the favourite pastor is present, the fondness of attachment must be shewn, by expecting him to be the oracle in conversation, the expounder of God’s word, the intercessor in prayer, and the popular haranguer in the public assembly.

None but those who have borne “the burden and heat of the day,” in the *active* discharge of a pastor’s jurisdiction, can possibly comprehend the nature of that multitudinous throng of miscellaneous duties, which necessarily devolve upon him, and almost crush his enfeebled frame into the dust. How unwise, then, how inconsiderate, and how unkind, to aggravate the evil, by the addition of aught that is unnecessary or superfluous ! If the age of miracles had not gone by : if pastors had not been men but angels : if, on ascending the pulpit, they could trust to some inexplicable supernatural afflatus that would cause their ideas spontaneously to flow in a full tide of reason, and argument, and persuasive eloquence : and if, besides, this earthly tabernacle had not been fragile clay, but brass or adamant—then indeed, but not till then, could a plausible apology be framed in defence of the countless, and often nondescript exactions, with which, in our day, ministerial time and ministerial strength are so unmercifully beleaguered. But, as facts are notoriously the reverse of all this, suffer me, my dear hearers, in the spirit of kindness, to caution you against the fatal inconsideration now reprobated. Roused by some unusual stimulus or pressing emergency, men may, at times, do wonders, both in speech and action. But depend upon it, that, without due time for study, meditation, and prayer, no man can well prepare a continued series of effective discourses ; or, if prepared, without a reasonable measure of health and strength, they can never be effectively delivered. And if ye persist in goading an already over-willing spirit, the brittle thread of life may be prematurely snapped asunder, and ye may

be unexpectedly called on to accompany the object of reverential regard, with sorrowing hearts, to the grave.

There are, alas, hireling watchmen, to whose case the preceding remarks are wholly inapplicable. “Blind they are and ignorant: dumb dogs that cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.” But praised be God, yours is not of the unhappy number.

3. It is your duty to put the most candid and charitable construction on his general conduct.

A Christian minister is bound by his profession to be the depository of “sound doctrine;” and, in practice, a pattern to his flock. A Christian people are equally bound, by their profession, to acknowledge no one supremely as master, save Christ, and no authoritative standard of appeal, save the Bible. And as no minister who is a mere man, can pretend to be infallible in judgment, or immaculate in conduct, the people can never renounce their liberty of conscience, and freedom of thought in bringing both his doctrine and practice to the unerring touchstone of God’s holy word. But, while such comparison is not only suggested, but demanded by the spirit of faithfulness, it ought ever to be conducted in the spirit of love and prayer. Remember that he who occupies the post of leader in the fore-front of battle, is most exposed to the shafts of the enemy. If, then, errors and faults, real or imaginary, should be discovered, let them be tenderly dealt with. Let them not be heedlessly blazoned forth, to become sport for the spirit of malice, which delights in magnifying the failings of others, in order to screen one’s own. Let them not be cruelly circulated

about, as the staple article of that religious conversation which too often degenerates into religious gossip, and that again, into a wholesale retailer of irreligious scandal. On the contrary, mourn over them in sorrow, or carry them to a throne of grace, or go, in the spirit of love, to the pastor himself, and “entreat him as a father.” How know you, but opinions and conduct that appeared, at first view, inexplicable or inconsistent, may admit of the most valid explanation, or the most triumphant defence?

Take one example by way of illustration, on account of its constant recurrence. Does the supposed fault consist in the absence or diminution of personal attentions? Are the pastor’s visits of mercy less frequent than before, or less frequent to you than to others? And must this be construed as an indication that he is less interested than formerly in your temporal and spiritual welfare? Suffer not, I beseech you, the injurious insinuation to grow into suspicion, and suspicion into jealousy, with its attendant brood of discomposing reflections. For, how know you, by what causes he may have been influenced, and whether these, if revealed, might not amply justify his apparent neglect? How know you, what an unusual pressure of harassing engagements may have devoured his time; or what urgent peculiarities of circumstance may have unavoidably diverted a more than ordinary share of attention elsewhere? In this and every other similar case, let love “without dissimulation” predominate in your hearts, and preside over your cogitations,—that love “which thinketh no evil,—which rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;”—and if ye judge at all, ye cannot fail, in accordance with

the precept of your divine Master, to “judge righteous judgment.”

4. It is your duty to pray for him frequently and fervently.

The minister is so very commonly styled “the mouth-piece” of the congregation, and the people are so much accustomed to claim a peculiar interest in his prayers, that the very idea of its being their duty, in return, to pray for him, is often allowed to drop into practical non-existence. Yet, it is very certain that there was a period in the Christian Church, when the prayers of the people in behalf of those who ministered among them in “word and doctrine,” were highly prized, and earnestly solicited. And by whom, think you, has the solicitation been most frequently and importunately reiterated? By one whose writings are characterised by no expletives—no supernumerary expressions; by one as highly endowed with gifts of nature, and assuredly as enriched with those of grace, as any of the most favoured of the sons of men; by one, who, being caught up into the third heavens, saw and heard things unutterable, and who, while a sojourner on earth, seemed fired with the holy energy of a celestial visitant. And if Paul, the prince of apostles, and the brightest ornament of mere humanity since the fall, set a value so pre-eminent on the prayers of the members of the primitive Church, how much more ought ordinarily gifted ambassadors to request and prize the supplications of the faithful?

Prayer in the name of Christ, and through the all-prevailing merit of his intercession, is the key that unlocks the golden treasury above. And if it be true, that, when the

pastor's prayers are wanting, the people are apt to famish, is it less likely to be true, that the absence of prayer on the part of the people may issue in sterility in the ministrations of the pastor? If the prayers of the shepherd open wide the windows of heaven, till the streams of grace come down in an inundation of spiritual affluence among the members of the flock, who can tell, when his instructions are most unctuous, and his appeals most effective, but the secret aspirations of some humble disciple may have previously ascended to the throne of the Eternal, and are then found descending on his head, laden with heaven's richest perfume?

My dear hearers, when ye pray for yourselves, and all your brethren of mankind, let not special petitions in behalf of your pastor be found unregistered in the calendars of eternity.

5. It is your duty to be prepared not only for variety, both in the matter and manner of his public addresses, but such variety as may not appear always instructive to all who hear.

Remember that a minister has to deal with every gradation of intellect, from the most shallow to the most profound, from the most illiterate to the most learned,—and with every description of character, from the trembling inquirer to the most confirmed believer; from the most abandoned profligate to the most advanced saint. Of necessity, if faithful to his trust, he must endeavour to render his instructions successively applicable to the state, temper, and condition of all. In order to this, he must bring out of his treasury “things new and old,” in forms

endlessly diversified. Otherwise, how can he, in the highest and most legitimate sense of the expression, “become all things to all men?” How can he minister to their different necessities? How can he be wise to win souls? Instead, therefore, of indulging in the tone of ignorant, carping criticism, instead of rehearsing the complaint of dislikings and disapprovals, learn to disengage yourselves from the narrow exclusive spirit that would centre all upon self. Learn to view each other as members of one body—one common brotherhood, the head of which is Christ—and, instead of launching forth sentences of condemnation, seriously inquire whether any brother has been revived by what may have proved unrefreshing to you. And if the inquiry be met in the affirmative, rejoice on account of that which has been blessed to a brother, though it may have appeared to you unsavoury, inapplicable, or even unintelligible.

Has your minister a mind enriched with the stores of human learning and wisdom? It is for the sake of some, to silence the cavils of the unbeliever and the scoffer,—to unravel the sophistries and confound the subtleties of the ungodly and the profane,—to clear the meaning, establish the connection, and exhibit, in alluring colours, the divine beauty and harmony of that revelation which ought to form the anchor of your souls, sure and steadfast, and unmoveable.

Does he possess clearness of thought, quickness of perception, vigour of language, and irresistible cogency of argument? It is, for the sake of others, to pull down the

strongholds of error, to establish the foundations of truth, to fight the battles of the faith.

Can he, if not with the awful thunders, at least with the awful terrors of Mount Sinai, sound in your ears the dread sentence, “Cursed art thou, because thou hast not continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them?” It is to arouse all of you from the deep slumbers of a fatal security.

Does he display richness of fancy, and beauty of illustration? Does he searchingly explore the secrets of the heart, and expose to the light of day its ingenious subterfuges? Does he wield a master’s influence over the passions, and meltingly impress the feelings with a pathos of deepest tenderness? It is all for the sake of arresting your attention, subduing your hearts, and encouraging your souls to rest upon Him who is the only “refuge from the storm,” the only “covert from the tempest.”

Once more, can he discourse in the softest strains of speech? Can he dwell, in the most affecting manner, on the unspeakable love of Christ? Can he describe the bitterness of his sufferings, and the glories of his regal state? Can he charm with his glowing descriptions of the joys of heaven, and the triumphant songs of the redeemed? It is all with a view to strengthen your faith, to increase your joy, and inflame the ardour of your love.

In a word, has God been pleased to endow him with a rich variety of gifts? It is in order that he may be enabled to distribute the bread of life in proper season, and in due proportion, so as most effectually to meet the varied wants of all.

6. It is your duty to spare him the anguish of spirit that must accrue from finding you hearers of the Word only, and not doers also.

“Hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me,” is the language of Jehovah. It is therefore at your peril if ye resist its *practical* influence.

Some there are who regard the relation between pastor and people as a matter of gross arithmetical calculation—a mutual compact which acknowledges no seal, save that of “filthy lucre.” The latter furnish their pecuniary quota, and the former supplies an equivalent in preaching, and what more have they to do with each other? True, if the pastor has faithfully given the warning, he has “saved his own soul,” but if the people have rejected it they must “die in their iniquity.” But a wretched hireling must he be who can thus deal out his warnings like so many marketable commodities, and then sit down in easy contentment with his mercenary reward. Think you that the man who feels himself to be, in a certain sense, the spiritual representative of his people, and answerable at the bar of heaven for the blood of their souls, think you, that such a man can be satisfied with a hire so miserable and so perishable? It cannot be. His must be the glorious hire of ransomed souls.

When, therefore, time after time, and especially Sabbath after Sabbath, he lifts his voice in faithfulness as in the presence of Jehovah, and the consciences of hearers may be partially awakened, and their hearts partially affected, and their understandings partially enlightened, but still finds that, ere the next opportunity recurs, the

world, with its ever-varying anodynes, in the shape of business, or calculating carefulness, or festive amusement, has uprooted the seeds of conviction, and effaced every salutary impression ; think you, that this can be a pleasant or comfortable discovery? Oh! it were comparatively easy for those who place an undoubting reliance on their God, to bear with the earthquake that swallowed up their dwellings, or the pestilence that strewed their habitations with the ghastly relics of beloved friends ; yea, it were a matter of rejoicing to encounter perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, and perils among the heathen, in order to rescue perishing souls from the “ horrible pit and the miry clay,” and restore them to the open fields and clear heavens of pardon, reconciliation, peace, and joy. But, for the faithful servants of Christ, to exhaust themselves into weakness, to belabour themselves into the grave ; and all this for the production of impressions transient as those made by the fluttering wing on “ the elastic air,” or the crossing ship on the “ unfurrowed ocean ;” all this, therefore, for the accomplishment of nothing, or less than nothing, or worse than nothing, even the aggravation of the guilt of those who turn a deaf ear to so many entreaties,—Oh ! such a reflection as this, forced on the mind by dire experience, often produces a state of feeling that defies description—it is often an agony without a name.

God, in mercy, grant that those now present may spare their pastor the infliction of such an agony.

If ye do, your own will be the rich reward. If, awakened by your shepherd’s warnings, ye arise, and flee for

your lives to the hope set before you in the Gospel, ye shall taste of purer joys than earth can afford. Ye shall, in your own experience, confute the vile calumny that to become believers in Christ, is to cease to be happy—is to relinquish the springs of enjoyment, and assume the garb of moroseness and melancholy. For who, friends and brethren, have the best title to rejoice?—the children of this world, who toil more severely after some fleeting imaginary good than the galley slave at the oar, or the wretched captive in the Siberian mines, and toil in vain, and die in despair?—or the children of God, whom the voice of pardon has called from the wintry region of sin and wrath, to the radiant abodes of light and liberty—called to be partakers of the exuberant bounties of God's grace here, and the inheritors of glory, honour, and immortality hereafter? Need we hesitate as to the nature of the reply? You, who have been called, and justified, and sanctified, tell me—tell me, ye hoary-headed saints—if you have not really found all the ways of religion, ways of pleasantness, and all her paths, paths of peace? You, whose souls were once troubled by many painful, many restless anxieties, do you testify, for you alone can, how incomparably sweet was the sense of that pardon which opened unto you the gates of righteousness and peace. You, who had long mourned in darkness, fearfully agitated with thoughts of guilt, despair, and fiery indignation, do you testify, for you alone can, how inexpressibly ravishing was that joy which streamed through your souls with overflowing fulness, when the day-star first arose in your hearts, and the light of God's reconciled countenance shone

full around you. Say, if this was not a “joy unspeakable, and full of glory,”—a gleam of that pure unalloyed pleasure—a foretaste of that glowing, exquisite delight, which “the spirits of just men made perfect” experience in the sensible presence of Jehovah, and the Lamb. Aye, and if dangers should still arise, and temptations assail, and tempests lower, in your passage through time, tell me if you are not enabled to withdraw and regale yourselves in heavenly retreats. Happy, in poetic vision, the possessors of those fabled islets reared on high in mid-ocean, where, o’er-canopied by a sky that is ever clear and embosomed in bowers that are ever green, they can look down and calmly survey the abyss of tumultuous waters beneath : but happier far, in sober and felt reality, the people who are raised aloft on the Rock of Ages, beyond the reach of “windy storm and tempest.” Upborne on the wings of faith, hope, and charity, they can look down serenely on the fitful changes of the world of busy men, and view its commotions and strifes, its follies and frenzies, its horrors and deaths, undaunted and unmoved. To them every tear is converted into gladness, and every cloud is tinctured with a rainbow : every desert begins to bloom, and every wilderness to blossom : nought is heard in their tabernacles but the voice of melody, and the shadows of the evening and morning rejoice over them for good.

And if such be the stay and support of the righteous in time—such their antepasts of eternal bliss—oh, what must the boundless fruition be !

The oftener we attempt, in thought, to cross the gulph

that separates the visible from the invisible, in order to bring back some report, however imperfect, of those bright realms that shine afar, we must confess that we feel the more constrained to sink down in wondering amazement and exclaim, impossible, impossible! And yet there are times when the soul, as if buoyant with divine energy, must wing its flight to the heaven of heavens; even though wearied and exhausted with the effort she should return more baffled and confounded than ever.

We stand upon the ocean's shore: we look abroad on the expanse of waters: we can discern neither bounds nor bottom. We ascend some neighbouring and overhanging cliff, around whose base the angry surges, lashed by the storm, have often spent their fury: but still we can discern neither bounds nor bottom. We reach the summit of some towering mountain that shoots upwards into the sky; we find the horizon widened till we are overawed by a feeling of the sublime in the view of what seems immeasurable.

In the vision of faith, we take our stand on the shore of eternity, and are soon overwhelmed at the dazzling prospect. And the higher we ascend in the roll of unending ages, the more it spreads and brightens before our view. Entranced with rapture, we break forth into singing. And our song is of the heavenly paradise, with its tree of life, of which those who eat shall not hunger any more—and its water of life, of which those who drink shall not thirst any more—yea, and its fountains overflowing into rivers, and rivers swelling into floods, and floods expanding into oceans of pure, unmingled delights. But what

are the choicest flowers and excellencies of earth but dim corporeal resemblances of the unchangeable archetypes of things in the heavens?—Here, then, I must pause. I have ventured to direct you to the threshold. I cannot enter the temple. I feel lost under the blaze of glories ineffable. I can only approach and admire, fall prostrate and adore. And I beseech you to do so too. And, after the toils, dangers and alarms of an earthly warfare, have issued in final victory—and the forfeited shades of paradise lost, have been exchanged for the never-ending sunshine of paradise regained—you shall have an eternity to expatiate amid the realities of the stupendous scene.

Finally, dearly beloved brethren, let me, in the touching simplicity of apostolic language say, while I say it from the very bottom of my heart, “fare well.” May you fare well in time; may you fare well in eternity. On the subject of your kind intentions * towards myself, I dare not enter, in this place; but it is one to be had in grateful and everlasting remembrance. I have this day endeavoured to repay you, however inadequately, in the only way in my power. And if ye suppose that ye owe aught in return, the only way in which ye can cancel the debt, is to remember more fervently in your prayers, and more bountifully in your contributions, those millions of fellow-subjects in the East that are famishing for lack of knowledge. For myself, I declare openly, because I do it in simplicity and in truth, that I have long desired to be ready to be, and to do, whatever my heavenly Father willed. However sense may flout and scorn, by what faith must ever reckon a call

* See Appendix.

from above, He hath been pleased to summon me, all feeble and unworthy though I am, to undertake the office of watchman in a far distant land—a land overshadowed with idols—a land full of the habitations of cruelty—a land where, above every other, Satan's dwellings may be said to be. These summons I have already endeavoured cheerfully to obey. And if I had thus early deserted my post, from any cause less overpowering than an afflictive visitation of Providence over which I had no control, methinks, the cry of the blood of souls would have been still ringing in my ears—haunting my path by day, and disturbing my repose by night! And where duty now plainly recalls me, I am again prepared to go—"not knowing the things that shall befall me there,"—not knowing whether "ye shall see my face in the flesh any more." But though oceans may intervene in time, neither time nor space shall be able to sever the union and communion of spirit with spirit, that is redeemed through the blood of Jesus. The last messenger may lay his iron grasp on this clayey tenement—the cold grave may reduce it into ashes—and these may be scattered to the four winds of heaven; but, blessed be God for the assured hope, that, on the hallowed morn, which chases away the shadows of time, and ushers in the "birth-day of eternity," soul and body, re-united and glorified, shall mount on high, with ransomed myriads, to possess the promised land:—

"Where death-divided friends at last
Shall meet to part no more."

APPENDIX.

See Page 42.

PARTLY to explain this allusion, and partly to obviate certain prevalent misconceptions on this subject, the following brief statement is submitted for the sake of readers at a distance from Aberdeen.

By the constitution of the South Parish Church, Aberdeen, the magistrates are patrons of the church. The initiative, however, in appointing a minister, is vested in a body of managers, along with the kirk-session. And it is specially provided that, if the managers and kirk-session are *unanimous* in nominating and recommending an individual to undertake the pastoral superintendence over them, the magistrates are bound to issue their presentation in favour of that individual.

In February last a vacancy occurred in this church, which led to a communication from A. Webster, Esq., Advocate, to the author, of which the following is the commencement:—

King Street, Aberdeen, 26th February 1836.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am about to address you on a subject most deeply interesting and important, not to myself only, but to all connected with the South Parish and congregation, and to which I entreat your serious and prayerful consideration.

You are already aware that Mr Davidson is to leave that charge. The magistrates presented him on Monday to the West Church, and he has accepted of the presentation. Of this change I shall only say, that the prospect of it has occasioned the greatest anxiety to myself and the other elders and managers, who, by the constitution, have the initiative in appointing his successor. The circumstances of the South Church congregation are so remarkable, distinguished as they have always been for their entire harmony, (the best proof of which was the unanimous election first of Mr Leith, and then of Mr Davidson,) as well as for their respectability and regularity, that the managers and elders felt a most weighty responsibility devolved upon them in the prospect of Mr Davidson's retirement. The most sanguine of us scarcely ventured to hope for another unanimous settlement. You will judge then of our feelings, when it became evident that this might be attained.

At a meeting of the managers and elders, held last night, Mr Davidson's resignation was laid before them. They then resolved, with one voice, and most cordially, that you should be invited to undertake the pastoral charge of the South Church, and as preses, I was directed to communicate with you on the subject. You will therefore understand this letter as being not merely from myself, but as also conveying officially an expression of the wishes and sentiments of the whole body of my colleagues. I believe, from what has reached me and them from many quarters, that this resolution is only following up the wishes of

the congregation in general ; and indeed the managers and elders would not choose to act without a reference to their understood predilection.

The remainder of Mr Webster's letter is occupied with varied and powerful statements, enforcing the peculiar claims of the South Parish Church, expatiating at considerable length on its capabilities as a place of ministerial usefulness, and illustrating the multiform advantages connected with the spiritual oversight of it.

To this communication the following was the reply :—

MY DEAR SIR,—Seldom or never has any communication more deeply affected me than yours of the 26th instant. A call so unprompted, so spontaneous, and so unanimous, to undertake the pastoral charge of such an affectionate, united, and influential congregation as that of the South Parish Church of Aberdeen, might well fill with emotion a heart more steeled than mine against the susceptibilities of nature. It has led me most devoutly and solemnly, as in the sight of the heart-searching God, to review the motives by which I have been actuated to aspire to the high honour of “preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” The considerations which you adduce are confessedly grave and weighty ; but grave, and all but overwhelming though they be, the result of my prayerful deliberation has been a more matured conviction than ever, that duty to my God and Saviour beckons me to forego all proffered advantages at home, and persevere in devoting my feeble imperfect services to the advancement of his glorious cause among the heathen.

Knowing as I do the enlarged spirit of Christian charity which you breathe, I cannot doubt that you will patiently bear with me in presenting the following cursory remarks :—

1st, There is no foundation whatever for the report that I have been dissuaded from returning to India. Neither by word nor deed have I ever given the least possible encouragement to it. True it is, that many have attempted to dissuade me, and more than once have the most tempting offers of useful and honourable employment at home been placed within my reach ; but I have uniformly resisted all such solicitation, and peremptorily declined all such offers. Again and again have the horrors of past affliction been cruelly resuscitated, in order to scare me by the dread of future suffering. Still, though thrice brought to the very brink of the grave by successive attacks of some of the most virulent tropical diseases, and though not yet perfectly restored to wonted health and strength, I greatly rejoice in spirit that God has empowered me to feel, and thankfully to declare, that so long as he appears to have any work in reserve for me in India, its pestiferous atmosphere has no terror for me.

2d, As to the sphere of usefulness in Aberdeen, to which you so forcibly and justly draw my attention, God forbid that I should undervalue it. Its equal in magnitude may elsewhere be found, but in all Scotland I do not believe it can be surpassed. Pardon me, however, for sincerely cherishing the belief, that the field of India is transcendantly greater. For your thousands we have our millions, endowed with immortal souls, alike precious in the sight of Heaven. Your thousands have been born and brought up in a Christian land of “glad-

some light and liberty;" our millions in a region of heathen bondage and pagan darkness, that "may be felt." Your thousands have been replenished with stores of the "bread of life," and the "water of life;" our millions are still famishing in a dry and parched wilderness, "wherein no waters be." Your thousands have already professed to throw aside the weapons of unnatural rebellion, and acknowledge their allegiance to the King of Zion; our millions are, up to this moment, in fierce battle array—raging against the Lord and his Anointed. Your narrow subjugated domain, therefore, requires only a peace establishment to retain it in quiet possession; our almost boundless hostile territory seems to demand equally boundless resources to level its frowning citadels, and establish the kingdom of the Messiah on the ruins of Satan's empire.

3d, The inducement to labour amongst an awakened, devoted Christian people is a sufficiently potent one; but it must be borne in mind that my feelings and affections are, to a great extent, pre-occupied by a small but attached band of Christian disciples in the East; for whom I have laboured and travailed in pain, that they might, through the influence of God's Spirit, be born again, and so become sons of God—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Some of them, I know, deeply mourn my temporary absence; and numbers more are looking with eager longing eyes for my return. Oh! then, how would their confidence be shaken—how would their reasonable anticipations be blasted—were they to hear that I had been persuaded to prefer the soft and downy repose of "a living" at home, to the arduous struggle of joining with them in hastening the birth-day of their country's emancipation from the long dark night of Satan's reign, and sin's uncontrolled dominion!

4th, Were I to remain in my native land, it would doubtless be still in my power to do something by way of advocating the claims of poor benighted India. In that case, however, methinks my tongue would not only falter, but often "cleave to the roof of my mouth." Fearlessly and unsparingly have I reprobated the indolence and cowardice of those who kept lingering, lounging, and loitering at home, in lazy expectation of some snug peaceful settlement, instead of nobly marching forward into the wide field of the world, to earn new trophies for their Redeemer, by planting his standard in hitherto unconquered realms. Neither have I suppressed my honest indignation at the no less criminal supineness of others, who, having once obtained such settlements, ingeniously devise a thousand petty frivolous pretexts for continuing to wrap themselves up in the congenialities and luxurious indulgences of home, instead of boldly daring, though at an immeasurable distance, to tread in the footsteps of apostles, and prophets, and martyrs. Not that I would have such loiterers to join our storming ranks. Far otherwise. I, for one, would wash my hands of the guilt of appending such drags to the chariot wheels of the conquering Messiah. The grand evil is that such persons should exist at all, arrayed externally in the garb of the heralds of salvation. How often have our ears been regaled with the music of eloquence, echoing the songs of divine chivalry, and the battles of the faith? But, all the while have we not been left in sorrow to exclaim,—Where the rushing crowd of champions, clad in armour of light? Where the continued toiling, and struggling, and fighting which form the certain prelude to

decisive victory? Alas! alas! if without an effort, without a struggle, and without a sacrifice, imagination alone could conquer all difficulties, then, with the ease of some potent spell, and the rapidity of some inexplicable enchantment, might we behold every howling waste converted into gardens of delight, and golden palaces starting from every barren shore!

Such sentiments and expressions may be deemed by many over-severe and not a little uncharitable. If so, I cannot help it. What I feel strongly, I express strongly. How then could I in consistency, after such decisive expression of my own feelings, reconcile myself to the resolution of throwing aside my weapons of aggressive warfare, and timidly shrinking down into the shrivelled form of a comfort-seeking time-server at home? What a plausible corroboration might thereby be given to the base calumny, that few or none go forth to heathen climes, but such as have been unsuccessful and disappointed candidates for office in their native land,—the only merit allowed them being the ignoble one of making a virtue of necessity? What a triumph might be furnished to the thousands who stoutly call in question the sincerity of those who profess their willingness to submit to sacrifices for the sake of Christ? And with what shouts of derision might any appeals of mine, on the subject of personally engaging in the toils of Missionary labour, be responded to?

No, no; whatever else may be said of me, I am resolved, through God's grace strengthening me, it shall never be said that I basely flinched in the hour of temptation, or traitorously relinquished the post of danger,—thereby throwing a stumbling-block in the way of my brethren and fellow-labourers in the east and in the west. I am resolved, with the blessing of God, to prove that it is possible for his grace to embolden even a poor, frail, worthless worm of the dust as I am, to court the privilege of sacrificing ease, and comfort, and friends at home, for the sake of advancing his glory, by endeavouring to extend the triumphs of the cross in foreign lands. And much as I have already suffered in the attempt, I bless God that he has put it into my heart to be cheerfully willing to suffer again,—to persevere in the divine work of scattering the "indestructible seed" in the face of all difficulties,—to water the seed so scattered with my tears, aye, and with my blood too, if required in fulfilment of the purposes of an all-gracious Providence.

5th, In writing in such a strain, I beseech you not to suppose for a single moment that it arises from a desire to glory in any thing which I may have been enabled to do, or may yet do, towards advancing God's glory in the world. The Searcher of Hearts doth know that such desire is most alien to the entire current of my thoughts. For after we have done our best,—and our best we are in duty bound to do,—what are we in His sight but unprofitable servants? My meaning simply is, that, so far and so long as God, in his great and undeserved mercy, bestows upon me the least ability, I am prepared, in this or distant lands, with heart and soul, and strength, and mind, to spend and be spent in his blessed service.

Two causes only would induce me to relinquish my present position. 1st, Such a degree of ill health and consequent debility, bodily and mental, as would palpably unfit me for the arduous labour. Or, 2d, The offer of the personal services of any of my brethren in the

ministry, many of whom are infinitely better qualified by endowments of nature and of grace, to encounter the toils and the hazards of our great missionary enterprize,—an enterprize where all former experience often fails, and an entirely new experience must be wrought out, challenging a concentration of sagacity and tact, and holy perseverance, and prayerful wrestling with God, to which our “Masters in Israel” alone can, without presumption, lay claim. Should my health finally fail, or should any such competent labourers present themselves,—then, indeed,—but not till then, would I deem it my duty to abandon the position I now occupy, and, resigning it into abler hands, gladly retire into the peaceful seclusion of some humble station in the Redeemer’s vineyard at home.

6th, Having thus calmly and deliberately made up my own mind as to the path of duty, I may not, and must not swerve. All considerations of personal or family advantages must vanish. Being a husband and a parent, I trust I know something of the strength and peculiarity of domestic ties ; I trust I am not blind to the claims which a beloved partner and children have on my protection and support. But the ties of grace—the claims of a bleeding Saviour—are higher, holier, stronger still. And it is my rare and singular felicity, to feel assured that every sentiment which I have now uttered finds a ready echo in the breast of that bosom friend, who has heretofore rejoiced with me in my joy, and sympathised with me in my sorrows. And painful though the trial must prove to flesh and blood, we are both prepared, when the hour of separation comes, to part with our dear little ones—perhaps for ever—commending them, in the exercise of faith, to the care and keeping of Him who is pre-eminently the friend of the friendless, and the father of the fatherless.

And, now, my dear Sir, what shall I say, in conclusion, relative to the expression of favourable regard which your letter so emphatically conveys ? To say that it vastly exceeds any thing to which I feel myself entitled is to say little. I could not speak of it, if I would, in terms at all adequate. The theme I must therefore leave to the musings of “ expressive silence.”

From the vivid interest taken by you and your friends and townsmen, in that mission to whose interests my life has been devoted, Aberdeen has long ere now been endeared to me ; but it has become doubly so now. It is imprinted on the tablet of a grateful heart, as if engraven with a pen of iron on the rock for ever. And should God spare me to revisit once more the distant shores of India, even there will it not cease to rise up before me in fondly cherished remembrance.

That God, in his infinite mercy, may pour upon yourself and colleagues, and all the members of the South Church congregation the richest effusions of his grace,—and raise up unto you another pastor, according to your heart’s desire—is the earnest prayer of your affectionate friend in the Lord,

ALEXANDER DUFF.



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